

The Dogs of Muskovia

This article contains the seeds of an idea for a Hawkmoon adventure. It's not a complete scenerio by any means, but it should contain enough ideas to at least get you going.

INTRODUCTION:

It is said that a single king rules Muskovia, with a hand picked council of nobles. His power is growing, and it might one day even rival Granbretan's own. As with all stories, the current tales of Muskovia contain many elements of truth and falsehood.

Although the King of Muskovia does indeed rule a great kingdom, it must be remembered that Muskovia is a tremendous land.

Although the King of Muskovia does exert some strong control upon many lands near to Kerninberg, he rules the furthest regions only in name. Many villages are isolated from the power structure of Muskovia, and have been for hundreds of years. This adventure focuses on one such village, the village of Vuktil, which rests at the edge of the Ural Mountains.

SETTING UP THE ADVENTURE:

This adventure is begin when the PCs learn certain of the legends of Muskovia. Perhaps they read them in a long dead explorer's journal, or hear the stories from a Muskovian farmer, who fled the land many years ago. The legends will tell of the Dog Men of the Ural Mountains, and ascribe many magical power to them.

There are many potential adventure hooks that could get the characters interested:

* In the Tragic Millenium, only a small amount of radiation fell upon the lands of Muskovia. For an entire colony of mutated men to be thriving in the land is at least somewhat of an anomoly. A scientist may wish to study the Dog Men as part of his investigations into Biological Lore.

* The King of Muskovia could hire the adventurers to seek out the Dog Men. He has heard tales of them and begun to worry that they might unify into a fighting force, leaving him with foes on every side. He wishes the PCs to either assure him that the Dog Men are not a threat, or destroy them.

* Some legends may tell of powerful artifacts that the Dog Men guard. They are said to be great ancient items able to protect

entire kingdoms. A kingdom which wishes to remain apart from GranBretan's empire (such as Kamarg) may send adventurers looking for the Dog Men.

THE TRIP TO VUKTIL:

The trip through Muskovia should be a long one. It is a trying journey across baren lands. Humanity is sparse in Muskovia, with occasional farming communities being the only true marks of civilization. Adventure ideas for the trip include:

* ENCOUNTERS NEAR KERNINBERG: Near the city of Kerninberg, where the King of Muskovia dwells, military troops are constantly drilling and training. Adventurers might easily stumble across one of these groups of soldiers. Explaining their presence in Muskovia will not be simple, for the King of Muskovia is suspicious of foreigners.

* FREEDOM FIGHTERS: In Muskovia, there are lands that have been conquered, and people who wish once more for the days of self-rule. While journeying across Muskovia, the players might stumble across such a community. Initially, they will have to convince the freedom fighters that they are not agents of the King itself. Afterwards, will they be able to abandon the freedom fighters, who seem to be warring against a regime nearly as oppressive and decadent as that of GranBretan itself?

* ANCIENT TREASURES: There are great tracts of land in Muskovia which have not been explored since the Tragic Millenium. As the players journey across Muskovia, they might stumble upon an ancient city, nearly intact. Perhaps it is now inhabited by machines, who have forgotten the ancient humans who once constructed them. Perhaps wild beasts, or degenerate natives now control the city. Alternatively, it might still be ruled by men of Muskovia who have kept the knowledge of ancient technologies since the Tragic Millenium, and now consider themselves the only True Men (they could be sadly deluded, of course, and their Technology all a sham).

Eventually, as the adventurers near the Ural Mountains, they will meet people who know of the Dog Men. They will be directed towards the village of Vuktil.

THE VILLAGE OF VUKTIL:

Arrival at the village of Vuktil will be somewhat anti-climatic. It seems that the stories of the place were a muddled exaggeration. Dogs are exceedingly plentiful in Vuktil, but they seem to be just ordinary pets to the normal humans of the village.

Of course, all is not as it seems. The dogs are a species of mutants. They are highly intelligent and able to communicate telepathically. The villagers worship the dogs and are able to communicate with them through their priest, a mutant human who can also communicate telepathically.

However, the villagers will not easily reveal their secret to outsiders. Only if the adventurers can prove themselves will the villagers open up. The villagers of Vuktil value three things above all others: bravery, generosity and honesty. They will test the adventurers in these three traits, and only confide in them if they succeed in all three tests.

When adventurers prove themselves trustworthy, then the people of Vuktil will do whatever they can to help them in their tasks.

FUTURE STORY IDEAS:

After the adventurers have come to know the villagers of Vuktil, humans and dogs alike, many new adventure ideas become possible:

- * The King of Muskovia, or another local warlord, may decide to attack Vuktil. Will the adventurers help their new found friends?
- * Tired of their cold, desolate home, the Vuktilians ask the players to bring them to a sanctuary somewhere in Europe. The migration of the Vuktilians could be an epic tale. Will the players actually be able to find a true sanctuary?
- * The priest of the dogs could be an old man, close to death, who begs the adventurers to find a replacement for him, lest the dogs leave the village after his death. The players would have to travel across Muskovia, searching for rumors of a mutant with rather unique powers.

OTHER OPTIONS:

Although this adventure is set in Muskovia, the village of the dog men could be moved elsewhere in Europe, as long as it is an isolated place, usually free of the intrigues of civilization.

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